

*Electoral Boundaries*

all, northern Ontario is not asking for anything which it does not deserve; it only asks the commission to be fair.

To underscore my argument, Mr. Speaker, that the commission for Ontario has failed to fully realize the 25 per cent tolerance factor I would point out that in the province of Quebec the commission there proposed to let 51 per cent of the ridings be below quotient. The commission for Ontario has proposed only that 42 per cent be below quotient. I submit that there is quite a difference in approach.

Now, it may well be asked why the commission for Ontario should pay any particular attention to one region within the province rather than just deal with the province as an entity, allowing what may happen to happen. I have already suggested one reason, which is that it should do so because northern Ontario makes up most of the land mass of the province.

In addition, the commission, in its report, makes specific reference to northern Ontario. I wonder why it did that? Why would it feel obliged in any way to even mention northern Ontario? This leads one to suspect that the commissioners may have been somewhat troubled by what they did. The report says, in this reference, that all of the non-urban ridings in northern Ontario are below quotient. That is not even factually correct. I point to the proposed riding of Nickel Belt which is well above the quotient, at 89,392. That is a non-urban riding in northern Ontario. The commission makes special reference to northern Ontario in its report. The commissioners recognize the problem but, I submit, they have failed to respond to it. In this debate, that will go back to the commission for study, I call upon the commissioners, on behalf of the people of northern Ontario, to respond to the problem in a responsible way, in a way in which they should have responded in the first place, and not put us in this situation and through this kind of agony and uncertainty.

Earlier, I referred to the more populous southern part of the province. It is quite astounding to me, as I look at the recommendations, so-called, of the commission to note that in this relatively compact region, the remaining 20 per cent of the province, heavily populated, the commission has proposed that no less than 30 ridings be below quotient. That has to be astounding. In northern Ontario there are ridings above quotient, and that is in 80 per cent of the geography of the province, and in the southern part 30 of the seats are to be below quotient. Some of them are well below quotient, almost to the bottom of the tolerance level. That is an astounding situation.

Why should northern Ontario be given special consideration? I think the answer to that was very well provided by a representation to the commission submitted by the board of directors of the Lakehead social planning council. Let me quote what it said as follows:

The vast hinterland ridings of northern Ontario deserve special consideration over both the urban and rural ridings to the south. Transportation and communication between communities in the north is far more difficult and indeed, in some cases, non-existent. The availability of social, medical, educational and other governmental services of all kinds falls well below that of the southern areas. Disparity in accessibility to information increases the further away from governmental centres one goes. These conditions create unusual demands on the elected representative who must often in a very direct and personal way act as the official or unofficial representative of such public services and institutions. In addition, there are the special problems of the north, development, resource management and ecology

[Mr. Penner.]

which demand constant and conscientious representation for the sake of all Canadians.

For these reasons, the Lakehead Social planning council objects to the loss of parliamentary representation in this area. We appeal to you to reconsider the proposed boundaries and population figures and urge you to accede to the 25 per cent tolerance below the electoral quota in order to maintain the present level of representation.

When one seat is taken away, as the commission is proposing for northern Ontario, it means much more for the region than simply the loss of one voice in parliament, although that in itself is a serious deprivation. The member of parliament, however, is more than a solitary person. The office of a member is more like an agency providing assistance to people in a wide variety of ways. The member of parliament, the constituency office, the member's staff in Ottawa, together comprise a team to which citizens can turn for help, advice or information, as the case may be. We are not talking about a solitary person being removed; we are talking about taking away an agency or an action team serving the people of that area. It may be said that perhaps the people in a region such as northern Ontario rely more heavily on their elected representatives than do those in the heavily populated centres. Because of the relatively small size of the communities—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McCleave):** Order, please. I regret very much having to interrupt the hon. member, but I would remind the House of the special order made last week limiting speeches to 20 minutes. The hon. member may always ask for unanimous consent; then the Chair will see whether it exists.

● (1640)

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. Members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McCleave):** There is not unanimous consent. The hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence).

**Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham):** Mr. Speaker, having been involved in the political life of this country and of the province of Ontario for longer than I would care to admit, and having been an elected representative at two levels of government for almost 20 years, I must say to you, sir, that I have seen many different forms of redistribution of political boundaries take place. I have seen abuses take place under the old system at the provincial and federal level to the point where obviously reforms had to be made.

The vehicle used by the provincial and federal administrations of this province and country, of course, involves the concept of a so-called independent commission. As I say, I have seen both bad and good redistribution. I have seen bad reports from independent commissions, and good reports. I must say to you, sir, that the current commission in the province of Ontario, to my mind certainly produced one of the worst reports I have ever seen in the form of the initial report that was brought down last year.

I must say that a complete change took place. I do not know whether it was because of representations made in respect of the crummy report of last year, but in any event in respect of southern Ontario the current commission has